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ABSTRACT

In 1990, the Arizona legislature initiated the Arizona School Restructuring Pilot Project. This report identifies local- and state-level barriers encountered in the first 2 years. Outcomes are presented for the 15 pilot schools--11 elementary and 4 high schools--that were selected in a competitive grant process. Data were collected through school self-evaluation surveys, telephone interviews with key participants, and onsite observations. The following local-level barriers are identified: lack of training/inservicing for key stakeholders; lack of knowledge concerning state laws, school board rules, and available resources; district actions to maintain uniformity; limited discretionary monies allocated to the school-level; and the impact of district-negotiated teacher contracts. State-level barriers included: restrictive certification requirements; numerous state-mandated instructional topics without adequate financing and support; excessive and redundant reporting requirements; an inequitable finance formula and budgetary restrictions; and restrictive teacher-dismissal laws with prolonged timelines. Given the resistance to state-mandated restructuring, it is suggested that state-level policymakers focus instead on empowering school-based personnel through information, training, and support. Recommendations are made for developing such an infrastructure of support. Nine figures are included. The appendix contains a list of participating schools and a funding summary for the pilot project. (LMI)

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BARRIERS TO SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the national movement to "restructure" rather than simply "reform" our country's K-12 educational system, Arizona legislators initiated the *Arizona School Restructuring Pilot Project* in 1990. For 4 high schools and 11 elementary schools—as selected in a competitive grant process—Senate Bill 1552 provided them with a unique opportunity to pilot their restructuring plans over a four-year period so that others in the state could benefit from their pioneering efforts. This report represents preliminary findings and observations of the 15 restructuring pilots as they identify both local and state level barriers encountered in the initial two-year phase of the pilot.

Pilot schools were encouraged from the beginning to be cognizant of the state and local-level barriers encountered as they chartered new territory through their restructuring efforts. Although many of these schools are only beginning to challenge the status quo through the establishment of site based decision making (SBDM) teams, multigraded classrooms, year round schooling, integrated technology, and other restructuring activities, many *real* and *perceived* barriers have been identified.

The full report identifies numerous issues, including several key barriers under the control of local-level policymakers: 1) lack of training/inservicing for key stakeholders; 2) lack of knowledge concerning state laws, school board rules, and available resources; 3) district actions to maintain uniformity across all schools; 4) limited discretionary monies allocated to the school-level, thereby limiting decision making authority; and 5) the impact of district negotiated teacher contracts. Key state-level barriers include: 1) restrictive certification requirements; 2) numerous state mandated instructional topics without adequate financing and support; 3) excessive and redundant reporting requirements; 4) an inequitable finance formula and budgetary restrictions; and 5) restrictive teacher dismissal laws with prolonged timelines.

Some schools have successfully negotiated their way through a number of potential mine fields, while others have been stymied in their attempts. For example, one school successfully negotiated year round education with its district office, thereby changing the role of stakeholders. Yet others have been frustrated by their districts' desire to maintain the uniformity of all its schools, thereby preventing any one school from being too innovative. Indeed,

all pilots have identified barriers that they have been unable to negotiate. To this end, a variety of activities that would serve to mitigate such barriers have been proposed for consideration by both state and local policymakers.

Given the resistance to state "mandated" restructuring and/or decentralization, it is suggested that state-level policymakers focus instead on empowering school-based personnel, not necessarily through the law, but through information, training, and support. Proposals to create such an "infrastructure of support" for districts and schools include: 1) development of state and/or regional restructuring support centers where school-based personnel could tap into the latest research, current state laws and rules, and restructuring efforts of other schools; 2) creation of a state cadre of trained facilitators to assist schools in developing formalized SBDM teams; 3) initiation of a formal state waiver process whereby districts and individual schools could seek release from state board rules and state laws; 4) the requirement that a minimum percentage of discretionary funding be allocated from the district to each school desiring such authority; and 5) continued efforts to streamline certification and teacher dismissal requirements. At the local level, a number of suggestions are offered to school boards that are serious about the initiation of SBDM teams, including the development of a local waiver process in order to minimize the requirement for all schools to be uniform. These types of state and local activities need to be considered for schools desiring to move forward toward true restructuring.

For schools to successfully traverse the path to true restructuring, an increased measure of autonomy must occur—thereby making SBDM one key vehicle in the process. For this to occur, training and inservicing of school site personnel will remain critical components for schools engaged in the change process. As stakeholder support is fostered for a common vision—coupled with a properly laid foundation for SBDM and the maturing of team members—the message from restructuring schools in the future may very well be: lead, follow, or get out of the way. Until that time, the *Arizona School Restructuring Pilot Project* is providing valuable information to policymakers relative to the unmet needs of school-level personnel.

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INTRODUCTION

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During the last decade, states' influence over schooling has expanded into a number of new territories that were previously the jurisdiction of local governing school boards and educators. One such area sparking a major debate in the 1990s concerns the role of the state in encouraging and/or mandating school restructuring activities. Most people believe that Arizona's educational system needs major restructuring; however, there is a great deal of uncertainty as to what restructuring really entails, how state and local roles must change, and what is preventing schools from moving ahead at a faster pace. This paper focuses on one aspect of the restructuring debate—the identification of both state and local barriers impacting on 15 schools involved in the *Arizona School Restructuring Pilot Project.* Using this information, state and local activities designed to mitigate such barriers are proposed to advance discussions on this topic among Arizona policymakers.

The first step in this process is to review the ultimate goal of restructuring and its key components. Once these have been understood, the barriers to successful school restructuring efforts and appropriate roles for stakeholders can be more readily identified by those involved in the restructuring process.

The Goal of Restructuring

The key goal of restructuring education is to improve student achievement; yet, educators are caught between the old and the new ways of schooling. The old way is guided by decades of unchallenged practice, limited school-level authority, and measures of student performance that focus on memorizing facts in isolation of in-depth content coverage. The new way strives to develop a system that can meet the needs of all students, is unshackled by outside influences, and emphasizes high academic standards and student outcomes. Caught in the bonds of tradition, many educators find themselves having to maintain "status quo" methods of schooling while attempting to implement innovative methods conducive to preparing all students for a high-technology world dependent upon critical thinking skills, not rote learning.

Components of Restructuring

Components of restructuring focus on changing roles in governance; changing roles of stakeholders (e.g., legislators, school board members, district office, school site personnel, parents, students, business partners, community members); and curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Reorganizing the governance of schools is frequently referred to as site based decision making (SBDM) which entails an ongoing process of collaborative planning and decision making by key school-level stakeholders. How this is best accomplished and to what extent authority from the state, local school board, and central office is delegated to the school level are key points of debate.

When the governance of education changes, so do the roles of the stakeholders. In general, state legislators can promote the process of restructuring by creating the political conditions that support change, set challenging standards for student performance, provoke district and school site innovation, and create new accountability systems. School board members must be responsible for enacting new policies and revising old ones that impede restructuring at local school sites. When shifting from centralized management to SBDM, the role of district office personnel changes from being decision makers to support personnel; these roles need to be clearly defined so as to avert conflicts when personnel at both the district office and local school attempt to make the final decision. School site personnel must change the way they organize and carry out instructional activities; this transition only occurs when the school district is willing to commit its resources to staff development and training in such areas as student assessment, multi-

age grouping, and site based decision making. Involving parents, students, business partners, and/or community members in the decision making process not only increases involvement in decision making, but better decisions are made. Of course, each of these tasks is much easier said than done, yet most agree that the success of our current and future students depend on these types of changes.

Reform versus Restructuring

Many practitioners today use the term "reform" as a synonym for "restructuring"; however, this is not the case. Generally, reform refers to short-term activities that focus on improving the current system, while restructuring embodies the notion of long-term systemic structural change. Although the goal of both reform and restructuring focuses on improved student performance, reform efforts have focused on changing one piece at a time (e.g., curriculum but not organization) in a system comprised of numerous interlocking pieces. Restructuring activities, on the other hand, are based on the premise that all students can and must learn at higher levels, but that the current "assembly-line, piece-meal" system of schooling must be modified in order to achieve this goal. Restructuring, therefore, embraces an even greater challenge than does mere reform because it requires an examination of all pieces as they contribute to the whole.

RESTRUCTURING IN ARIZONA

State level policy efforts at promoting restructuring in Arizona's educational system have been a priority for the past several years. An important policy effort became a reality in 1990 when Senate Bill 1552 was passed into law, authorizing a Joint Legislative Committee on School Restructuring Incentives to approve up to 16 grants for school-based restructuring efforts. During Fall, 1990, a request for proposals (RFP) and review process were undertaken by this committee with 15 proposals being approved. These pilot schools, 4 high school and 11 elementary, were selected based on their proposals to engage in a restructuring process focused on six primary goals:

1. Increase parental involvement.
2. Improve academic achievement.
3. Improve the school environment.
4. Meet the unique needs of students.
5. Increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the school.
6. Improve the professionalism of, and cooperation between, the school's teachers.

Initial funding for FY 1990/91 was determined by the enrollment of the school. For FY 1991/92, funding amounts were doubled, with a five percent increase occurring for each of the remaining two years of the project. (Refer to Appendix A for a list of pilot schools and their funding levels.) Because this project is to serve as a type of laboratory focused on the process of school restructuring, the Arizona Department of Education contracted with Morrison Institute for Public Policy (Arizona State University) and the Institute for Educational Research and Evaluation Studies (ASU West) to provide the Joint Legislative Committee and participating school sites with technical assistance and evaluation respectively. The efforts of the schools as well as the findings from the external researchers are being reviewed to determine "what works," and what role, if any, the state must play in these efforts.

It should be noted that in addition to the 15 pilot school projects, the vast majority of districts and schools in Arizona are attempting to implement some type of reform and/or restructuring efforts. Part of the uniqueness of the formal *Arizona School Restructuring Pilot Project* as initiated by the legislature is that individual schools, not districts,

are the focus of intensive external review. This represented an early attempt by the legislature to investigate the issues associated with a more decentralized system of schooling.

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BARRIERS TO RESTRUCTURING

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SURVEY OF RESTRUCTURING SCHOOL PILOTS

Barriers to restructuring—whether real or perceived—impact on school sites' abilities to restructure. School sites, called upon by their state governments to restructure, frequently posture that they are handcuffed in their efforts to do so by the restrictions imposed by regulations at the state and local levels.

The Morrison Institute for Public Policy has sought to identify those issues that are viewed as barriers by the pilot schools. It should be noted that many of these schools have just begun the process of restructuring, while some could debate that many are merely reforming their system. Nonetheless, they have already encountered a number of issues that they believe are preventing them from moving ahead. As the process continues, it is believed that additional barriers will be identified. The following methodology was employed to gather this information.

Methodology

Barriers identified by school sites in their self-evaluation reports submitted June, 1992, were used to establish baseline data for this study. The resulting survey instrument consisted of a total of 21 questions that addressed issues in the following categories: 1) site based decision making (SBDM); 2) state issues; 3) teacher training and professionalism; 4) district office/school site issues; and 5) information/communication issues.

Surveys were mailed to each school site in early September, 1992, with a request that school personnel review the questions and prepare their responses. Telephone interviews were conducted one week later, lasting approximately one hour each and involving principals, faculty, and/or SBDM team members. These sessions provided an opportunity for dialogue on the issues confronting each restructuring site. Responses were analyzed and summarized within this report.

In addition to the telephone interviews, Morrison Institute personnel conducted at least one on-site visit per school during FY 1991/92. Five of these visits involved members of each school's SBDM team. Information gathered from two state-level project workshops has also been incorporated with the survey findings.

It should be noted that information presented in this report has been derived from the 15 schools involved in the formal state pilot project and therefore is not necessarily representative of the 1,000-plus schools throughout the state. However, when juxtaposed against other research on restructuring, this information appears to be reflective of events occurring in other schools and districts, both within Arizona and across the nation.

The following sections highlight the results of the restructuring survey as broken down into three key sections: 1) Barriers to Site Based Decision Making; 2) Local-Level Barriers; and 3) State-Level Barriers. Summary comments are contained within each section, with proposed activities to mitigate state and local barriers and concluding remarks offered at the end of this report.

❖ I. ❖

BARRIERS TO SITE BASED DECISION MAKING

Given that one of the fundamental components of restructuring is the changing role of governance, 14 of the 15 pilot schools report they are involved to varying degrees in site based decision making (SBDM). Twelve schools noted that they are "up and running"; two are in the process of implementing SBDM; while faculty members at one school indicated they were allowed to provide input into the decision making process, but that formal SBDM was not occurring at their school.

Site Based Management Structure and Activities

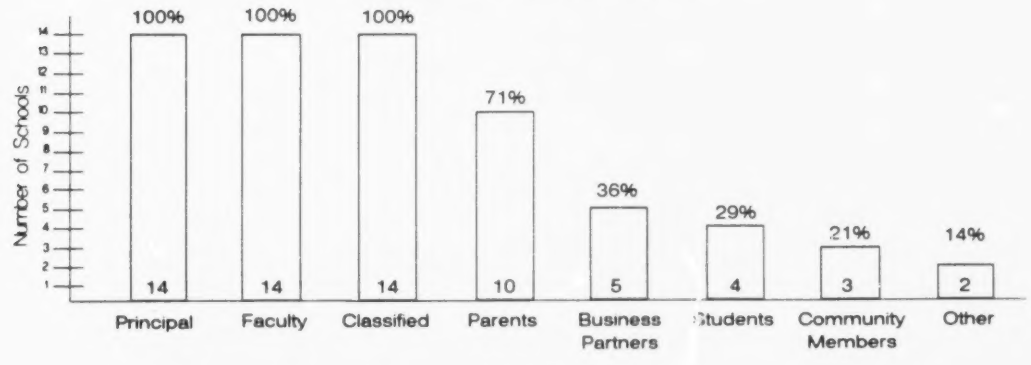
There is a great deal of interest in the structure of SBDM since it is something new and unproven on a large scale within the educational arena. Many educators are unsure as to how to implement the "mechanics" of SBDM and note that Arizona should not require or allow over 1,000 schools to reinvent the wheel. On the other hand, research focused on similar activities within the corporate world suggests that no one model can be used as a blueprint for all schools. Consequently, each school's effort to work through a SBDM process would result in a model unique to its needs. Therefore, there is debate on whether one or more models should be mandated by the state and/or local school boards *or* if each individual school should be allowed to develop its own plan. Without attempting to solve this debate, this section simply highlights the various ways by which 14 of the 15 pilot schools are implementing SBDM.

- **Length of Time Schools Involved with SBDM**—School personnel noted that their involvement in SBDM ranges from six months to eight years, with the average being 2.5 years.

- **Members of SBDM Teams**—Figure 1 illustrates that administrators, faculty, classified, parents, students, community members, business partners, and others (e.g., consultants) comprise SBDM teams. In general, the size of the various teams range from 8 to over 40.

- **Selection Process of SBDM Members**—Members of SBDM teams are selected in a variety of ways. One principal is solely responsible for selecting all team members. Three school administrators have 100% participation of both faculty and classified members; one of these three schools linked SBDM participation to its career ladder program. Of the remaining 11 schools, teachers in seven schools vote for their representatives, while classified staff vote for their representative(s) in five schools. Parents

Figure 1.
Members of SBDM Teams



are also chosen in a variety of ways—parents volunteer in six schools; one site has teachers nominate parents, with the parents then voting on their representative(s); one site encourages parents to vote for parents; and one site's parent representatives are comprised of its PTA president and one executive member. Additional positions at all SBDM schools are filled by volunteers, except for one school that allows its students to vote for their representatives.

- **Frequency of SBDM Meetings**—Of the 14 school sites, five meet regularly once a month and six meet regularly twice a month. Of the three remaining schools, SBDM teams meet once per week, four times a year, and once every three weeks respectively. In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, six schools also meet on an "as needed" basis.

- **Formalizing the SBDM Process**—Three SBDM teams have formal by-laws or written procedures outlining their responsibilities and areas of decision making, while two schools are working on establishing them. Three schools do not intend to formalize SBDM to that extent, while for six schools it has not yet become a priority (see Figure 2).

- **District Offices' Positions on SBDM for All Schools in District**—Ten of 14 schools noted that their district offices were promoting SBDM for all schools in their districts; three districts are considering SBDM, and one is not considering it at this time.

Figure 2.
SBDM Teams Having By-Laws

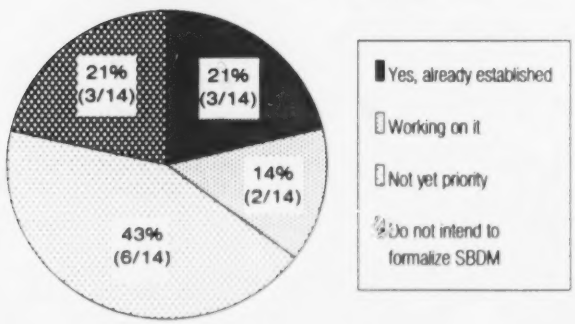
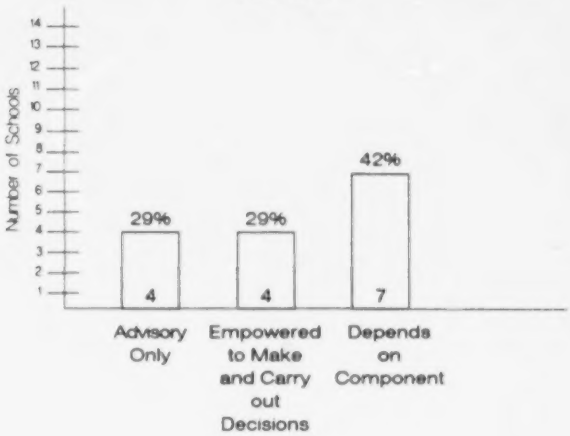


Figure 3.
Decision Making Authority of SBDM Teams



- **Decision Making Authority of SBDM Teams**—Figure 3 illustrates that the decision making authority of SBDM teams falls into three categories: advisory only (4 schools); empowered to make and carry through decisions (4 schools); or a combination of the two depending on the task at hand (6 schools). (Note. Although six schools indicated that their decision making authority (i.e., advisory versus empowered) depends on the component of SBDM, only three schools have written by-laws or written procedures delineating these.)

- **Areas of Involvement of SBDM Teams**—Figure 4 (on page 7) shows that SBDM teams are involved in a number of areas such as restructuring grant decisions (14 schools); curriculum (13 schools); funding/budgeting (12 schools); hiring (11 schools); assessment (9 schools); student placement (9 schools); and firing (2 schools). Three schools are each involved in one of the following additional areas: school programs, planning, and year round education.

- **Budget Responsibilities of SBDM Teams**—Other than the grant funds received by each school site in the restructuring pilot, nine schools receive additional funds for which their SBDM teams are responsible. These amounts range from six schools having no additional discretionary funds to one school with an amount in excess of $300,000 (see Figure 5 on opposite page).

State's Role in Promoting Site Based Decision Making

Although there are many SBDM activities occurring within the pilot schools, the vast majority of survey respondents believe there is a need for the state to help clarify the roles of various stakeholders (e.g., school boards, central office, local schools). Personnel in 11 of 15 pilot schools believe that an optional SBDM model would be helpful, while personnel in seven of these schools believe such a model/process would have to be *mandated for real change to occur*. Five schools state that their district offices would likely oppose any model, while two schools believe that there is no need for state intervention (see Figure 6 on opposite page).

NEED FOR MANDATED MODEL—Personnel in 7 of 15 schools believed that SBDM models should be mandated by the state for the following reasons:

- **Supports Stability**—Some school personnel believe that mandated models would guard against a turnover of school board members and administrators determined to control school-level issues, especially since school boards have had too much power with little or no expertise in education.

- **Minimizes Ability of District Office to Overrule Process**—Some have found that it has been difficult for district offices to voluntarily relinquish their centralized authority; having mandated models would allow the process of decentralization to occur more quickly.

- **Ensure Discretionary Funding for Schools**—School personnel note that in order for real change to occur, a minimum amount of discretionary funding must be allocated directly to the school; without a state mandate, this is less likely to occur.

NEED FOR AN OPTIONAL MODEL—Generally, personnel in 11 of 15 schools believed that a state developed optional model would be helpful for these reasons:

- **No Need to Reinvent the Wheel**—Given the relative newness of the concept, it would be helpful for the state to help districts and schools clarify roles as part of changing from a centralized system to a decentralized system. Optional models would eliminate the need for each district and/or school to reinvent the wheel.

- **Legitimize SBDM**—School personnel believed that having the state play a role in active support of restructuring would help lend credibility to SBDM and other restructuring activities.

NO STATE INVOLVEMENT NEEDED—Personnel in two schools believed there was no need for the state to clarify roles as part of promoting SBDM for reasons as noted:

- **Good Local Models Already Exist**—It was noted that many districts already have their own working models.

- **Takes Away Local Control**—Some school personnel felt that less, not more, government interference is needed so that school boards can more effectively run the districts; the state department and legislature should not be involved in district policymaking.

- **Decentralization would Create Chaos**—It was noted that the state should do nothing to promote decentralization since the creation of over 1,000 "mini-school districts" would create inefficiencies and chaos.

Figure 4.
Areas of SBDM Teams' Involvement

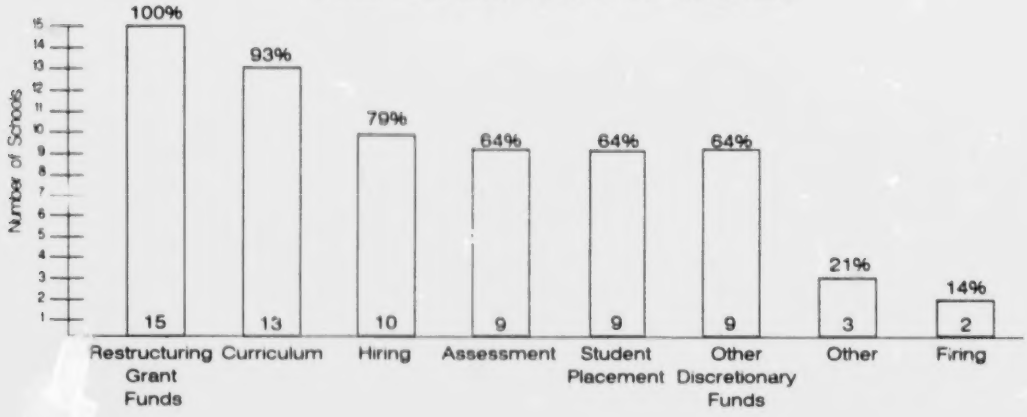


Figure 5.
SBDM Teams' Funding Responsibilities
(other than Restructuring Grant)

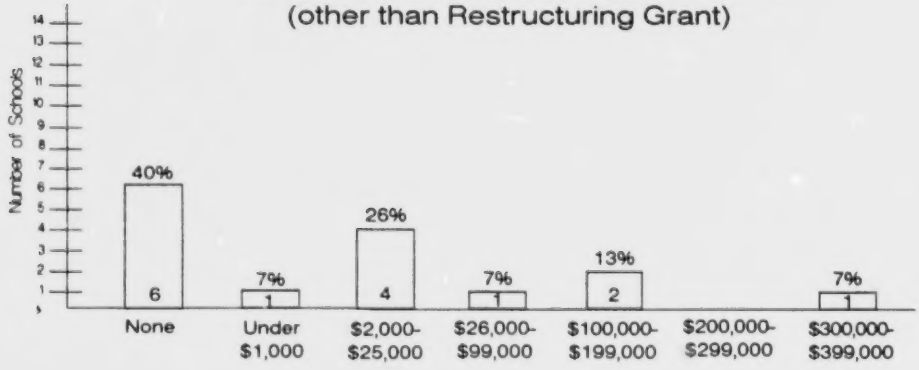
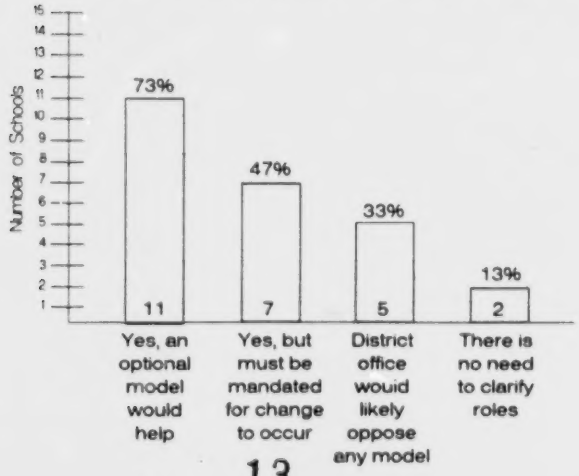


Figure 6.
Role of a State Developed SBDM Model



Summary of Key Barriers to SBDM

Although schools have only begun the process of SBDM as part of their restructuring efforts, the following barriers have been identified by school personnel as well as by Morrison Institute personnel. It is believed that as SBDM teams attempt to take on even more decision making responsibility, other barriers will be revealed.

- **Lack of Training/Inservicing of District and School Stakeholders**—Many of the schools acknowledged their failure to obtain proper training and inservicing of school site stakeholders prior to implementing SBDM. For example, it was noted that training is essential in at least the following areas: 1) knowledge of the change process; 2) planning the restructuring activities around school goals; 3) promoting stakeholder buy-in to the restructuring process; 4) reallocating funds as a result of prioritizing goals; and 5) establishing a common vision.

- **Lack of Time to Develop Formal SBDM Foundation**—Survey data revealed that nine of the 14 restructuring pilots involved in SBDM have never formalized their SBDM process, and indeed, research on restructuring suggests the longevity of these teams may be at stake. Without identifying and formalizing the parameters of the process including clarification of roles, expectations, and decision making limitations, a school site may be effective only because the leadership style of the principal is conducive to SBDM, or a select, committed group of faculty members ensure a measure of success. However, administrative and faculty turnover will impact greatly on the consistency to which informal, unwritten procedures are continued. Many school personnel now realize the importance of laying a proper SBDM foundation early in the process. Several school personnel noted that the failure to do so was due in part to the lack of trained facilitators to negotiate roles and areas of decision making between themselves and district office.

- **Lack of Knowledge Concerning State Laws, School Board Rules & Available Resources**— A number of building principals and faculty members noted that they do not have ready access to the types of information and resources that would allow them to serve in more than an advisory capacity (i.e., they lack knowledge about the legal issues surrounding many of the decisions historically made at the district office). Indeed, a large number noted that they *do* receive some information regarding state activities either from their district or directly from the Arizona Department of Education (ADE); however, this information frequently arrives too late to be acted upon, especially in reference to workshops and grant opportunities.

- **Inability to Convince District Office of New Methods**—School site personnel are frustrated in their attempts to be innovative while having to comply with district office expectations that the old methods remain the same. School personnel voiced that this was due to district offices' distrust of their ability to engage in effective decision making and to their lack of access to research and state-level information.

- **Requirement for All Schools to be Uniform**—The need for district offices to keep all schools "equal" hampers a number of schools involved in the restructuring grant. Indeed, one-third of the pilot schools believed that their districts channelled extra funds to other schools within the district in an attempt to keep all schools equal. District negotiated teacher contracts also serve to maintain the notion of uniformity across the district.

- **Limited Ability to Make "Real" Budget Decisions**—The majority of school personnel noted that the current amount of discretionary funding available to SBDM teams and the strong control districts maintain over these

funds are barriers to their efforts for several reasons:

- **District Maintains Control of Budget**—Since restructuring grant funds are sent from the state to the district for accounting purposes, it is difficult for some schools to gain information on exact expenditures and budget balances (e.g., in at least one pilot, it was revealed that district officials had charged costs against the restructuring grant that were not requested by the school; school personnel were not aware of the discrepancies until the legislative committee requested a budget breakdown from all pilots).

- **Lack of Adequate Discretionary Funds**—Given that most schools have little budgetary authority beyond their restructuring grant funds, many felt it was necessary to have control over larger portions of their budget in order to really make a difference.

- **Grant Monies used to Supplant, not Supplement, Existing Resources**—Survey results illustrate that in at least two of the schools, personnel believe that district funds were withheld from their schools as a result of the additional funding received from the restructuring grant (e.g., district funds initially allocated to one pilot school for technology were given to another school when the grant was received; teachers in another pilot school have been denied use of district funding for some training activities since they have their own grant).

❖ II. ❖

LOCAL-LEVEL BARRIERS

The previous section focused on SBDM-related barriers which are caused primarily by local-level decisions; however, some aspects of the discussion involved state-level implications. In this section, other issues strictly under local-level control are highlighted—the "climate for change," the impact of district negotiated contracts for teachers, and local school board policies.

Climate Barriers

Schools were asked to judge the impact of nine "climate" factors that, in their estimation, affected their restructuring efforts. The following scale was used: 3 = very much a factor; 2 = somewhat of a factor; and 1 = not a factor. All schools' scores were averaged in each of the nine factors and are presented below:

	Very much a factor (3.0)
Lack of Time	2.5
Lack of Discretionary Funds	2.1
Bonds of Tradition	2.1
Parent Apathy	1.9
Teacher Apathy	1.7
Lack of a Unified Vision	1.7
General Faculty Unwillingness to be a part of the change process	1.4
Administrator Apathy	1.1
	Not a factor (1.0)

Not surprisingly, the lack of time was the number one factor impacting on the schools—lack of time for training, inservicing, planning, innovation, SBDM meetings, and curriculum review were only a few examples. Naturally, the lack of discretionary funds at individual school sites greatly reduced many schools' ability to engage in the change

process since the approval of district offices was frequently a precondition to funding release time and changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Bonds of tradition refer not only to teachers tied to "business as usual," but also to district offices and communities. This was especially a factor for those schools engaged in year round education and SBDM. Teacher apathy was revealed more in the lack of buy-in to the restructuring process, which includes the perceived "passing fad" of SBDM. A number of schools—in hindsight—attributed the lack of a unified vision and unwillingness to engage in the change process to the lack of time committed to these issues during the first year of the restructuring grant. Only one school indicated that administrator apathy was "somewhat of a factor."

District Negotiated Teacher Agreements

Most school districts in Arizona and throughout the country enter into negotiated agreements with their teachers on an annual basis. Frequently, these contracts not only delineate salary levels, but the terms of employment. For example, hours per day teachers need to be at school, maximum number of meetings per month, specific reimbursement rates for committee and other outside work are commonly found in these contracts. In addition, these terms of employment usually apply uniformly to all schools in a given district.

Ten of 15 schools stated that their district teacher agreements made no real impact on their efforts to restructure, or only in a minor way. One other school noted initial problems, but these were successfully negotiated with its district office (i.e., different teachers' schedules for those involved in a year-round school program). However, four schools noted that they were stymied in their efforts to restructure because of unresolvable problems stemming from their negotiated agreements. The following issues serve to illustrate their difficulties:

- **No Inequities Allowed**—In one school, teachers unanimously committed to extending the length of the school day without additional pay were denied this option by the district office, even though transportation was not a problem. Conditions within the master agreement and a general philosophy to keep all schools "equal" was offered as the rationale.

- **Clock Hours Only**—In several schools, teachers refused to participate in restructuring activities that extended beyond their contracted hours as specified in their agreement.

Other District Policies

The following issues were mentioned by school personnel as other barriers that impacted on their ability to restructure and areas for which they would like waivers from their local governing board policies:

- **Inability to Allocate Own FTE Positions**—Many school districts have policies on the number of teachers per school based on numbers of students; some schools would like the ability to make these decisions based upon their total school budget.

- **District Mandated Transfers**—Many districts require schools to fill vacancies from a list of teachers within the district, or they mandate that a specific teacher be accepted. Two schools noted that their districts do not fire teachers; they merely mandate transfers for incompetent teachers which the receiving school has no choice but to accept. This process is repeated until the teacher voluntarily leaves the district or retires.

- **Cannot Hire Candidates from Outside District**—Similar to the previous issue, some districts have policies that give preference to in-district teachers and administrators for any vacancies. Some schools noted that they would like to be able to hire the best candidate, whether internal or external to the district.

- **District-Level Curriculum & Textbook Selection**—Some districts have policies that require all schools within the district to utilize the same textbooks for like grades and classes and to follow similar curriculum guidelines. Often this is done to minimize the impact of student mobility; however, schools noted this limits their ability to restructure.

- **Too Much District Testing & Reporting**—Several schools reported that they would like to be able to minimize their district testing requirements and focus more on outcomes based education and portfolios.

- **Too Much District Paperwork**—It was noted that a great deal of redundant paperwork is required by the district office, often without any real information as to why it is needed.

- **Rigid Transportation Structure**—Transportation is frequently linked to other schools in the district, thereby allowing no flexibility in the length of the school day; this prevented several schools from employing four "long" days and one "short" day for inservicing.

Summary of Key Local Barriers

Schools credit the lack of time, lack of discretionary funds, and bonds of tradition as the three main factors impacting on their ability to restructure. While parent and teacher apathy, lack of a unified vision, and a general faculty unwillingness to be a part of the change process were also identified, it was virtually unanimous that the impact of these issues would be greatly reduced if only the main three factors were dealt with.

Other barriers identified at the local level involve two distinct issues: 1) district offices preventing site level change because it supports uniformity; and 2) provisions contained within district contracts such as teachers unwilling to work beyond their negotiated clock hours. Additionally, a number of school personnel are frustrated in their efforts to move forward in the restructuring process by district office decisions made for them "in the best interests of the district," but that are not perceived by pilots to be in their best interests (e.g., allocating FTE positions; promotion of in-district candidates only; standardized use of textbooks).

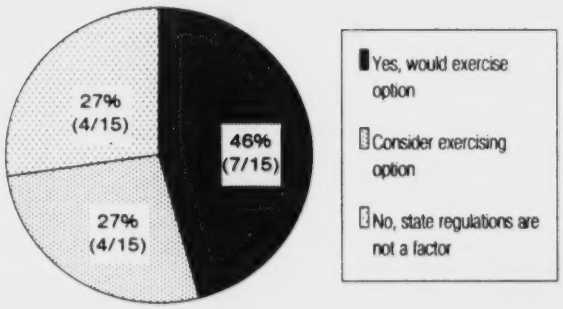
❖ III. ❖

STATE-LEVEL BARRIERS

A great deal of discussion has centered on the notion that many state laws and state board rules may be preventing schools from restructuring. To this end, pilot school personnel were asked to identify their requests for waivers from any state regulations, statutes, or policies, if they had the option to do so. The survey revealed that only four schools immediately knew they would exercise this option, while seven noted they would consider the option. Four schools indicated state-level regulations, statues, and policies had not been a factor to date (see Figure 7).

Of the 11 schools interested in exercising—or who would consider exercising—their option of being granted waivers from any state regulations, statues, or policies, 10 noted they would target state legislatively mandated laws, seven would focus on the State Board of Education rules, while eight would desire waivers from their district offices.

Figure 7.
Possible Waiver Option Exempting Schools from State Regulations

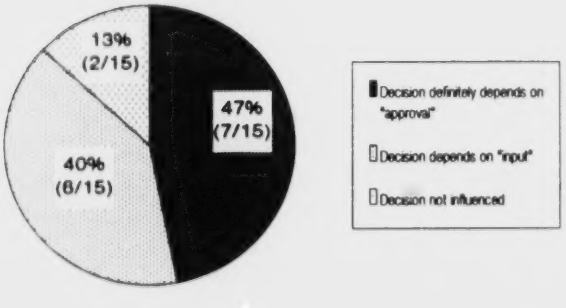


Finally, gaining the approval of superintendents and/or governing board members would influence seven schools' decisions as to which waivers they requested. Six schools indicated that they would first consider the input of their superintendents and/or governing board members, while two schools stated they would not be influenced when seeking waivers (see Figure 8).

AREAS SCHOOLS WOULD TARGET FOR WAIVERS—As shown in Figure 9 (on opposite page) schools noted the need for waivers in the following areas: 1) curriculum; 2) student assessment; 3) personnel/certification; 4) paperwork/reporting; 5) financing/budgeting; and 6) other (e.g., extend school day; mandates with no funding). Examples of barriers for which waivers were proposed include:

- **Curriculum and Assessment**—Six of 15 schools perceived that current state laws and rules related to curriculum hindered their efforts to restructure, while eight of 15 schools noted the same in reference to state-level student assessment requirements. Key reasons are noted:
  - **Mandates Without Adequate Funding**—Several schools noted that they would seek a waiver from having to teach certain state mandated topics (e.g., drug prevention, AIDS) unless adequate funding could be provided.

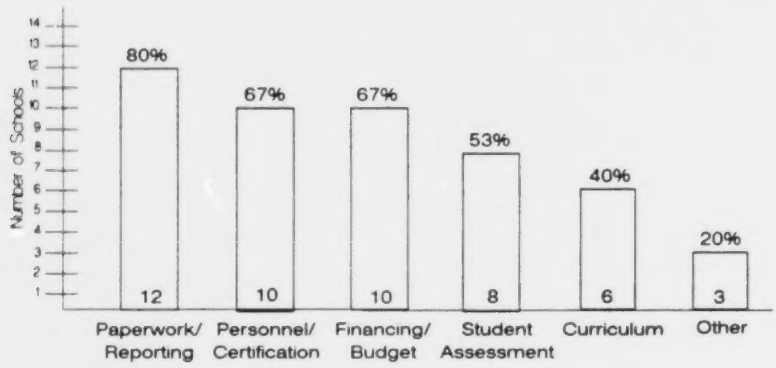
Figure 8.
Local Boards' Impact on Schools' Decisions to Seek Waivers



  - **Too Much State Testing**—Several schools believed that too much time and focus was spent on preparing for state mandated testing, especially since implementation support and training from the state is lacking. This was especially true for the norm-referenced testing programs, but also holds true for the new Arizona Student Assessment Program (ASAP).

- **Certification/Teacher Dismissal**—Eight of 15 schools noted that state certification requirements served as a barrier to their ability to hire the best teachers as part of their restructuring efforts. In reference to teacher dismissal statutes, 11 of 15 noted these to be a definite barrier, while four schools noted that they were either not a barrier, or it depended upon the teacher involved in the dismissal. The following issues were described:
  - **Restrictive Certificates & Endorsements**—The rigidity of certification requirements for specific subject specialized areas (i.e., math, science, special education, vocational education) impacts on schools' ability to hire otherwise acceptable candidates.
  - **Difficult to Hire Nontraditional Teaching Candidates**—Current regulations prevent schools from easily hiring non-certified individuals with degrees outside the field of education (e.g., engineers, scientists, military personnel). It was suggested that the current alternative certification process be streamlined.
  - **Additional Arizona Certification Requirements**—Although reciprocity exists for out-of-state candidates, they are still required by law to earn certain Arizona specific requirements (e.g., Arizona history and constitution) within a specific time frame.
  - **Teacher Dismissal Timelines Too Lengthy**—A vast majority of the schools

Figure 9.
Focus of Schools' State Waiver Requests



noted the current timelines for teacher dismissal were far too long and the amount of documentation necessary was excessive—especially if incompetency was not revealed until later in the school year. Schools also noted that due in part to longer timelines, fees for legal counsel can be excessive and are a special hardship on low wealth districts.

- **Paperwork and Finance Issues**—Twelve of 15 schools perceived that state required paperwork and the current finance formula were impacting on their restructuring efforts for the following reasons:

  - **Too Much Redundant Paperwork**—Schools noted that they would seek waivers from many state reporting requirements, especially on funds tied to restructuring, substance abuse, and ESL programs (excessive paperwork does not justify funds received).

  - **Need More Budget Flexibility**—It was expressed that there was a need to allow more flexibility for schools/districts to move funds between various categories (e.g., transfer of funds between capital and maintenance and operation).

  - **Inequitable Funding Formula Based on Inputs, not Outcomes**—Many schools voiced concerns with perceived inequities in the current funding formula (e.g., not using current year count; the impact of low assessed valuation on overrides and bond elections). Several noted that the formula should be modified to allow funding to be driven by student achievement gains in mastering outcomes instead of student count and seat time.

Summary of Key State Barriers

Although a number of restructuring efforts around the nation have introduced the practice of granting waivers to aid the restructuring process, Arizona is only in the initial stage of discussing this possibility. At least 11 school sites, however, indicated that they would more than likely utilize such an option if made available.

School personnel noted that the recent series of yearly budget crisis have strained the ability of many districts to maintain programs and services—let alone restructure. Not surprisingly, then, many of the waivers schools indicated they would consider pursuing were tied to funding. For example, several schools would pursue state-level waivers seeking

relief from having to teach mandated subjects (e.g., drug prevention, AIDS) that they believe were not adequately funded and which distract from academic instruction. Additionally, a number of schools were frustrated by the seemingly excessive amount of state-level redundant paperwork that cost schools in terms of time, money, and energy that can even exceed the amount of funding received. The issue of teacher dismissal was also related to financial concerns. Excessive timelines, documentation, and legal fees were very much a consideration for districts determining to pursue the termination of a tenured teacher.

Overall, it should be noted that there is a great deal of misperception among school-level personnel as to the specifics of state laws and rules. Frequently, barriers such as "the state requires a minimum number of minutes per day per subject" were offered, when in actuality this requirement does not exist in either state law or school board rule. Somewhere along the line, this "myth" was invented. In addition, many of the "real" barriers that schools attributed to the state were indeed mandates from the local board. This points to a greater need for information to flow directly from the state to the school site if indeed the system is to decentralize.

PROPOSED ACTIVITIES TO MITIGATE BARRIERS TO SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING

There continues to be great debate as to how restructuring and decentralization activities in Arizona can best be promoted and supported, with SBDM being at the heart of the discussion. Many argue that the state *should* play *no* role given that many districts are already moving ahead. On the other hand, personnel in 14 of 15 pilot schools revealed in this survey that the state *should* play a role in promoting decentralization to the school level, either through mandated or optional models. Given the complexity of the issue, future compromise will probably result in appropriate roles for *both* the state and the district levels. To that end, using suggestions from pilot school personnel and incorporating ideas extracted from other research on restructuring, the following activities would help to resolve some of the identified barriers. This list is by no means exhaustive, but focuses on the specific issues raised by the pilot schools to date.

1. **Local school boards and district offices** that are serious about promoting SBDM should initiate at least the following activities:

   a) Support school personnel in finding trained facilitators to help them develop formal, written SBDM rules that meet the needs of their stakeholders. As part of this process, it is critical for each school site engaged in SBDM to consider answers to a number of questions such as the following:

   - ✓ What do we mean by SBDM?
   - ✓ What roles need to be redefined, and how will we provide the necessary training and support?
   - ✓ What are the parameters, expectations, or limitations of SBDM?
   - ✓ What do we know about the change process, and how does this apply to our situation?
   - ✓ To what degree will variations and differences among schools within the district be accommodated?
   - ✓ What underlying conditions must be present for SBDM to work? How can we clarify and communicate them?
   - ✓ What can we learn from other organizations in the public and private sector about making the transition?

b) Dispense and/or increase discretionary fund allocations to local school sites for increased autonomy to occur.

c) Establish a process whereby appropriate SBDM team members have access to current knowledge on state level issues, laws, and rules, as well as grant opportunities and workshops.

d) Take steps to encourage and allow diversity among schools in the district. One beginning step would be to create a formal local level waiver review process whereby the governing board releases individual schools from specific district policies. True SBDM will create a different learning environment in each school based upon individual school-based decisions.

e) As current negotiated teacher agreements are up for renewal, local boards should encourage the inclusion of provisions that allow for differences among different schools, if indeed the majority of the teachers at a given school wish to initiate such changes.

2. Given that the research on SBDM suggests that no one blueprint can be transferred from one organization to another without major modifications, the **Legislature and/or State Board of Education** should focus their energies on developing an *infrastructure of support* that individual schools and districts could call upon. Given that many districts are already moving toward some aspect of decentralization, perhaps the best role of the state is to help empower school-based personnel, not necessarily through the law, but through information, training, and support. The following activities would be valuable:

a) Develop state and/or regional restructuring support centers where school-based personnel could easily tap into the latest research, current state laws, and state board rules, and network with other schools attempting to restructure.

b) Develop a cadre of trained facilitators that schools could call upon (perhaps on a cost reimbursement basis) to lead them through the process of developing a SBDM team.

c) Initiate a state law waiver process, whereby schools and districts could identify the specific laws that are indeed preventing them from moving ahead. Although the list of state laws and rules identified as barriers by the pilot schools is not extensive, there is merit to having the legislature establish a formal waiver process. In other states that have implemented such a process, few waivers have been sought, but many changes have occurred by virtue of having school and district personnel explore the possibilities. This process could be similar to the one being considered for adoption by the Arizona State Board of Education during Fall 1992; however, the State Board currently has only the authority to waive its own rules, not state law.

d) Address the feasibility of requiring at least a minimum percentage of discretionary funding be allocated from the district to individual school sites. Although many districts already do this to some extent, most of the pilot schools suggested that this is essential to their restructuring efforts.

e) Continue efforts to streamline the teacher dismissal process with a focus on reducing the timelines and the amount of documentation.

3. **The Joint Legislative Committee on School Restructuring** should take actions to prevent school districts from using school restructuring grant monies to supplant district funds, rather than to supplement. If a policy cannot be legally adopted, perhaps legislation is necessary.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Underlying Tenets of Restructuring

There is a need to reiterate that the identified barriers and proposed solutions reflect the input of only 15 schools in Arizona formally involved in a pilot restructuring project. It is equally important to remember that the pilot schools are in the preliminary stages of restructuring, having just completed the second year of a four-year pilot. As barriers are addressed at both the local and state levels in the upcoming year, the importance of continuing to collect data from those "in the trenches of restructuring" will add considerable value to Arizona's restructuring emphasis.

In closing, the following observations and comments are provided to emphasize several underlying tenets of the restructuring process that have serious repercussions to schools involved in this effort.

- **Whoever Controls Information, Has Control**—School sites are affected two ways. *First*, the majority of school-level personnel rely on their district offices to supply them with relevant information sent from the Department of Education concerning current and proposed revisions to state laws and state board rules, as well as workshops and conferences. In many cases, therefore, information is often not received in a timely fashion, or misperceptions occur due to miscommunication. Thus, school personnel are making decisions based on their misunderstanding of statutes and regulations (e.g., state mandates the number of minutes per subject per day). *Second*, schools lack information on successful restructuring efforts throughout the nation. Consequently, school personnel have few stimulants causing them to "think outside the box." Although many are taking graduate courses and attending numerous workshops, most focus on program reform (i.e., how to improve pieces of the system), not on total system restructuring. Therefore, when given a chance to make changes, reform—as opposed to restructuring—occurs based on the information to which school site personnel have access.

- **Principalships: A Stepping Stone to District Office?**—As SBDM teams mature, the role of principal evolves to one of Chief Executive Officer (CEO); however, the current status and salary associated with a principalship do not come close to matching the roles and responsibilities of "principal as CEO." Unless this occurs, many principals will continue to see their positions as mere stepping stones to the district office instead of committing themselves for the long run to ensuring systemic change at the school site.

- **If Time is Money, Is Money Empowerment?**—Training and inservicing of SBDM stakeholders in all three components (i.e., budget, curriculum, personnel) are critical for teams to become truly empowered in the decision making process. However, empowerment only occurs when teams have the authority to control the funds to implement their decisions. Only by channeling additional funds to school sites will SBDM teams shift from serving as advisory committees only to ones empowered to follow through on their decisions. Only a few of the pilot sites have been allocated significant sums of discretionary funding from their local board; in the vast majority, the school has minimal budget authority other than their restructuring grant funding and, in some cases, even this is limited. As the legislators continue to hear from numerous school districts that they are indeed moving toward a decentralized system, they should question how much "real" power has been transferred—power related to budgetary

authority. If this is not occurring, then one must question how much actual decentralization is occurring.

- **Perceptions: State v. Local; Perceived v. Real**—Much misinformation and misperception on restructuring "barriers" exist among local-level personnel. *First*, numerous "restrictive" state laws and/or regulation believed to be real are in actuality a perception. It was determined that many school (and district) personnel are operating on erroneous assumptions about what the state will and will not let them do. Somewhere along the line, many myths were created and are alive and well at the local-level. *Second*, when asked to comment on the state v. local barrier debate, personnel in eight schools believed that the majority of the barriers encountered were local-level issues; five pilots believed the majority to be state-level barriers; while two stated the barriers were equally distributed. Indeed, several schools initially stated that the state was the major blockage to restructuring, but later changed their view after they looked at the issue more closely. Given the national cries against excessive state bureaucracy, it is easy to assume that large numbers of Arizona state laws and state board rules are "strangling" districts and schools in their restructuring efforts. These state-level barriers *do* indeed exist as noted within this report; however, based upon data gathered from these 15 pilot schools, it appears that a majority of "real" barriers reside at the local level. This is not to point the finger at local school board policies or central office mandates as the only causes, for indeed many of the local-level barriers originate with school personnel (e.g., teacher negotiated contracts; unwillingness to change). Instead, the finger is pointed at the difficulty of retooling an educational system that has been carefully designed over the decades to function as it does; indeed, a higher percentage of students are graduating with higher levels of knowledge than ever before in our history. Unfortunately, this performance level is no longer acceptable and major restructuring is in order. Considering that the amount of misinformation and misperception is draining energy from the process, it would be valuable for state and local policymakers to remove the "perceived" as well as "real" barriers. Perhaps a state-wide survey to collect such information from the over 1,000 schools within 200-plus districts is a place to begin so that state-level policymakers are also dealing with "real" information.

Finally, for schools to successfully traverse the path to true restructuring, an increased measure of autonomy must occur—which translates into empowerment for school SBDM teams to make and carry through decisions that are in the best interests of the very students they serve. For this to occur, training and inservicing of school site personnel will remain critical components for schools engaged in the change process. As stakeholder support is fostered for a common vision—coupled with a properly laid foundation for SBDM and the maturing of team members—the message from restructuring schools in the future may very well be: lead, follow, or get out of the way. Until that time, the *Arizona School Restructuring Pilot Project* is providing valuable information to policymakers relative to the unmet needs of school-level personnel as they embark upon this journey.

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APPENDIX A

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Restructuring Pilot Project
Lists of Schools and Funding Summary
1990-1994

ARIZONA SCHOOL RESTRUCTURING PILOT PROJECT

List of Schools and Funding Summary

Initial funding for FY 1990/91 was determined by size of the school. For FY 1991/92, funding amounts were doubled, with a five percent increase occurring for each of the remaining two years of the project.

School/District	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94*
Carminati Elementary School Tempe Elementary S.D.	$ 7,500	$15,000	$15,750	$16,537
C.J. Jorgensen Elementary Roosevelt Elementary S.D.	25,000	50,000	52,500	55,125
Del Rio Elementary Chino Valley Unified S.D.	25,000	50,000	52,500	55,125
Gilbert Elementary Gilbert Unified S.D.	30,000	60,000	63,000	66,150
Glendale High School Glendale Union High S.D.	40,000	80,000	84,000	88,200
Kyrene del Sureno Elementary Kyrene Elementary S.D.	25,000	50,000	52,500	55,125
Laguna Elementary Flowing Wells Elementary S.D.	20,000	40,000	42,000	44,100
Litchfield Elementary Litchfield Elementary S.D.	30,000	60,000	63,000	66,150
Mountain View High School Marana Unified S.D.	40,000	80,000	84,000	88,200
Palmcroft Elementary Yuma Elementary S.D.	25,000	50,000	52,500	55,125
Papago Elementary Creighton Elementary S.D.	35,000	70,000	73,500	77,175
Rancho Viejo Elementary Crane Elementary S.D.	40,000	80,000	84,000	88,200
Safford High School Safford Unified S.D.	30,000	60,000	63,000	66,150
University High School Tucson Unified S.D.	25,000	50,000	52,500	55,125
Westwood Elementary Alhambra Elementary S.D.	25,000	50,000	52,500	55,125
TOTALS	**$422,500**	**$845,000**	**$887,250**	**$931,612**

*pending approval of Joint Legislative Committee on School Restructuring Incentives

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